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Andrews University engineering program achieves ABET accreditation

The Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology Inc. (ABET) recently notified Andrews University's Department of Engineering and Computer Science of their achievement of ABET accreditation, retroactive to 2006, for the engineering program. ABET is the nationally recognized accrediting body for college and university programs in applied science, computing, engineering and technology. This achievement gives Andrews University the distinction of becoming the second accredited engineering program in the Adventist higher education system. It is the culmination of years of work by many members of the Andrews University faculty and comes two years earlier than the original goal.

"Our program has always been of the highest quality. ABET accreditation confirms this," said Bill Wolfer, chair of

the Andrews University Department of Engineering and Computer Science.

Years ago, the faculty of the engineering technology program at Andrews University laid the foundation for developing a strong engineering program. Then, in 2002, a committee was charged with assessing the feasibility of establishing an engineering program at Andrews University. Would there be room for an engineering program, in addition to the one at Walla Walla University, in the Adventist education system? If so, would it attract quality engineering students? A study by Robert Kingman, professor emeritus, showed a large percentage of Seventh-day Adventist college students are receiving their engineering education from state schools. The research concluded with the realization of a great need for a Seventh-day Adventist engineering program located east of the Rockies to compliment the strong engineering program at Walla Walla University, located in Washington, while also offering students a choice for studying engineering at an Adventist institution.

In February 2003, the initiative to offer a four-year engineering degree program went to a vote of the Andrews University Board of Trustees. It was approved and the program was officially underway by fall semester of 2003. Wolfer, then faculty in the computer science department, was asked to chair the program. The first students majoring in engineering graduated in 2006.

"Dr. Niels-Erik Andreasen, president of Andrews University, believed in us and our vision for establishing a great engineering program here at Andrews. ... His charge to us was to develop a world class, socially responsible program that will be a place of choice for those seeking an engineering education in a Christ-

centered environment," said Wolfer.

The fledgling program received a significant gift, making it possible to equip labs with cutting edge technology, helping attract internationally diverse, world class educators and professionals.

Andreasen says, "Our faculty aspire to be socially responsible engineers who prepare our students well for continuing education (grad school) and industry. We charge them to take our values of social responsibility and service throughout their career."

The Andrews University Department of Engineering and Computer Science currently employs five engineering faculty and three computing faculty. During the 2007-2008 school year, the department had 96 students, with enrollment nearly evenly split between engineering and computer science.

In the midst of the accreditation process, the Industrial Partnership Counsel (IPC), made up of education and industrial professionals, was formed in order to provide key input into the program. Members of the IPC represent a regional, national and global perspective, and include representatives from Western Michigan University, the University of Notre Dame, Grand Valley State University, Premier Tool & Die Cast Corporation, Berrien Regional Education Service Agency, LECO Corporation, American Electric Power and the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers.

ABET, a federation of 28 professional and technical societies, is among the most respected accreditation organizations in the U.S. ABET currently accredits some 2,800 programs at more than 600 colleges and universities nationwide. ABET is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

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Boon-Chai Ng, professor of engineering, assists Katie Parker, a senior engineering major.